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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7286

INFO RUEHZA/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3466

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1976

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEWMFD/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003027

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF FRONT OFFICE

ALSO AF/RSA FOR LOUIS MAZEL, LAURA GRIESMER, LEARNED DEES

AF/E FOR JOEL WIEGERT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: HUMAN RIGHTS TRENDS REGARDING SEXUAL
ORIENTATION

REF: STATE 130765

Summary

1. (SBU) Ethiopia is a conservative society, as the vast majority of the population identifies itself as Ethiopian Orthodox Christian or Muslim. Leaders of both religious groups have denounced homosexuality. Homosexual conduct between adults is criminalized under Ethiopian law and punishable by up to ten years imprisonment. Post is not aware of any cases of homosexual conduct as such that have been prosecuted in recent years. In December 2008, a local organization named "United for Life" organized nearly a dozen religious leaders to sign a resolution urging lawmakers to ban homosexuality in the constitution. The Government of Ethiopia took no action as a result of this resolution. Post is aware of very few reports of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals; however, reporting may be limited due to fears of retribution. The anecdotal reports post is aware of come from credible sources and include forced marriages and rapes of LGBT individuals. End Summary.

Criminal Codes and Prosecution

2. (U) Homosexual conduct is criminalized under Articles 629-632 of the Ethiopian penal code. Homosexual conduct between adults is punishable by up to ten years imprisonment. Homosexual conduct between an adult male and a male aged 13-18 is punishable by imprisonment from three to 15 years; between an adult male and an a male under age 13 is punishable by imprisonment from 15 to 25 years; and between an adult female and a minor female (any age) is punishable by imprisonment not exceeding ten years. Homosexual conduct involving a subordinate relationship (e.g., guardian, teacher, employer) and homosexual prostitution are punishable by one to ten years imprisonment. (Note: Post concludes there is not an appreciable level of homosexual prostitution or sex tourism in Ethiopia. End note.) Imprisonment for life may theoretically be imposed in cases where "sexual outrage has caused the death or grave physical or mental injury upon the victim, or where the victim is driven to suicide by distress, shame, or despair." Post is not aware of any cases of homosexual conduct that have been prosecuted in recent years or any pending cases for homosexual acts between adults.

Public Attitudes

¶3. (SBU) Ethiopia is a conservative society, as the vast majority of the population identifies as Ethiopian Orthodox Christian or Muslim. Leaders of both religious groups have denounced homosexuality. In the past year, post received limited reports of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals; however, reporting may have been scarce due to fears of retribution, discrimination, or stigmatization. The anecdotal reports post is aware of come from credible sources and include forced marriages and rapes of LGBT individuals.

¶4. (SBU) Despite these negative attitudes, a thriving LGBT social scene exists in Addis Ababa. Parties are generally unannounced and held in private homes or bars, with invitations distributed via word of mouth or text messaging. Post contacts report that events are held at least on a weekly basis, with attendance of more than 50 people not unusual. Such events have been forced to relocate, sometimes on short notice, because of real or perceived threats to the establishments where they are held. However, no arrests or harassment have been reported linked to these social events. As in other countries, urban residents and young people are likely to be more tolerant of homosexual behavior when compared to their rural and elder counterparts, but even among this group conservative views dominate.

Recent Advocacy Campaigns

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¶5. (SBU) In December 2008, nearly a dozen religious leaders signed a resolution against homosexuality, urging lawmakers to endorse a ban on homosexual activity in the constitution. No action was taken by the government on this request. This effort was led by the organization "United for Life," which also campaigned against abortion rights.
MUSHINGI